

PROCEDURE for PROCESSING METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

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Introduction

Federal transportation laws and regulations¹ (i.e. SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21, 23 CFR Part 450) require that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) develop Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) for their areas of jurisdiction. These TIPs must be updated at least every four years and must be approved by both the MPO and the Governor. Currently, North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) policy directs biennial preparation of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), of which the TIP is a supplement.

This document has been developed to assist the MPOs in meeting the Federal Planning requirements and to simplify and standardize the processing of TIPs. This uniformity will provide for faster handling of the TIPs by State and Federal agencies and will allow the MPOs to spend more time developing the TIP and less time processing the TIP for approval.

This document describes the responsibilities of each agency involved in the TIP process. It will assist staff in reviewing and processing the TIPs in a comprehensive and efficient manner. This procedure has been coordinated among the appropriate business units of the NCDOT, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Sections I through VI discuss the responsibilities of the respective agencies/business units for new and amended TIPs. The STIP Development process is documented in Chapter 4 of the [Unified Public Engagement Process](#)², and has not been repeated in this document. Amendments and administrative modifications may be handled differently and are determined by the Department's approved [STIP Amendment and Modification Guidelines](#)³. The process for new TIPs will typically begin once the draft TIP is released as part of the development of the [10 year Program and Resource Plan](#)⁴.

In attainment areas (areas not subject to air quality conformity), it is assumed that the TIP is being developed from an approved Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and will not create a change to that plan. If the draft TIP requires a change in the MTP, then the MTP will need to be updated prior to the TIP approval.

In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, it is assumed that the TIP is being developed from a conforming MTP and will not create a change to that plan that would require a transportation conformity analysis and/or determination. Any TIP submitted for approval in a non-attainment or maintenance area will require the inclusion of a transportation conformity analysis and determination with the TIP (see FHWA's [Transportation Conformity Process Standard Operating Procedure](#)⁵). The transportation conformity analysis consists of reviewing the draft TIP to confirm that it is consistent with the conforming MTP. Information from the MTP's conformity analysis is then input directly into the conformity report for the TIP. If the draft TIP requires a

¹ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/>

² <http://ncdot.gov/download/performance/UPEP.pdf>

³ <https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/planning/Planning%20Document%20Library/STIP%20Amendment%20and%20Modification%20Guidelines.pdf>

⁴ <http://ncdot.gov/performance/reform/>

⁵ <https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/planning/Pages/AirQualityTransportationConformity.aspx>

change to the MTP (a project is amended or its schedule shifts across a MTP horizon year), then the MTP would need to be updated and a new transportation conformity analysis and determination would need to be made on the MTP. In this case, the analysis on the MTP should be performed as soon as possible after the draft TIP is released to ensure the MTP, TIP and conformity analysis and determination can be approved by FHWA.

I. MPO Lead Planning Agency

A. New MPO TIPs

1. The draft STIP will be developed as part of the State's biennial Project Prioritization process and 10 year Program and Resource Plan.
2. The Lead Planning Agency (LPA) will receive a copy (via email) of the draft STIP and TIP, as developed by the Program Development Branch (PDB), from the respective PDB Regional Manager.
3. The LPA will review the draft TIP for major inconsistencies with the regional priorities submitted to the Department as part of the Project Prioritization process. The LPA should notify the respective PDB Regional Manager and the appropriate modal jurisdiction (see Appendix A) of NCDOT of any inconsistencies. Early identification of potential problem areas early in the process will be more conducive to resolution of inconsistencies between the MPOs TIP and the STIP.
4. The LPA will be contacted by the PDB Regional Manager to schedule the *MPO Review Session with NCDOT* if such a meeting is necessary to discuss inconsistencies between the draft STIP and TIP. It is essential for the appropriate person(s) to attend this meeting to be able to resolve any inconsistencies.
5. The LPA will prepare the draft TIP and place it on the agendas of the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). (note: In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, it must be demonstrated that the draft TIP is a subset of the conforming MTP. The LPA will participate in the required Transportation Conformity Determination process according to provisions laid out in FHWA's *Transportation Conformity Process Standard Operating Procedure*.)
6. The LPA will make the draft TIP (and the conformity determination for non-attainment and maintenance areas) available for public comment in accordance with the MPOs adopted Public Participation Plan (PPP).
7. If the MPO holds a public hearing as part of the MPO's PPP, the LPA may contact the Program Development Branch and request NCDOT's participation.
8. The LPA will send a summary of public comments received on the draft TIP along with the MPO's response to any significant issues raised in the comments, to the respective PDB Regional Manager and the Transportation Planning Branch (TPB) MPO Coordinator for review by the appropriate modal jurisdictions. The MPO will determine what constitutes "significant" issues.

9. The LPA will transmit (via email) the adopted and dated TIP to the appropriate PDB Regional Manager. In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, the TIP will include the *conformity determination report* used by the TAC to make the conformity determination as developed through FHWA's *Transportation Conformity Process Standard Operating Procedure*.

B. Amendments to MPO TIPs

1. In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, the LPA MPO Coordinator will participate in the required Transportation Conformity Determination process for the amendment according to provisions laid out in the FHWA's *Transportation Conformity Process Standard Operating Procedure*. For amendments originating from the MPO, the LPA will transmit the amendment (via email) to the PDB Regional Manager and to the Public Transportation Division (PTD) (if amendment contains transit).
2. For highway/bridge/safety amendments originating from NCDOT, the PDB Regional Manager will coordinate with the Division Engineer, who will be responsible for discussing the amendment with the MPO and receiving their input using the *STIP Amendment Form* prior to it being placed on Item N (handout). The LPA will review the amendments and notify the PDB Regional Manager and the Division Engineer no later than one week prior to the BOT meeting in which it will appear on Item N handout of any issues that would prevent the MPO from moving forward with the public participation process and MPO approval. Once presented to the BOT on Item N (handout), the PDB Regional Manager will transmit (via email) the Item N (handout) to the LPA not later than 25 days prior to them being approved by NCDOT and they will be uploaded to the STIP revisions website.
3. For transit amendments originating from NCDOT, the appropriate Regional Mobility Director in PTD will transmit the amendment (via email) to the LPA no later than two weeks prior to the BOT meeting.
4. The LPA will make the proposed amendments available for public comment if required by the MPOs PPP.
5. The LPA will place the proposed amendments on the agendas of the TCC and TAC.
6. The LPA will transmit the adopted and dated amendment (via email) to the appropriate PDB Regional Manager. In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, the TIP will include the *conformity determination report* used by the TAC to make the conformity determination.

II. Program Development Branch

A. New MPO TIPs

1. The Program Development Branch (PDB) will receive public transit material from the Public Transportation Division, rail material from the Rail Division, bicycle/pedestrian material from the Bicycle & Pedestrian Division, and aviation material from the Aviation Division for inclusion in the draft STIP and TIP.

2. PDB will upload the TIP to the STIP Revisions webpage⁶ within one week of the draft STIP presentation to the North Carolina Board of Transportation.
3. Staff from PDB will be available to answer questions concerning the draft STIP and TIP.
4. PDB will contact the LPA to schedule and coordinate the “MPO Review Session with NCDOT” if such a meeting is necessary to discuss inconsistencies between the draft STIP and TIP. It is essential for the appropriate persons to attend this meeting that will be able to discuss any issues for the Department.
5. PDB will receive the Transportation Advisory Committee Chair’s letter of transmittal of the adopted TIP to the Secretary and copies of the TIP. A letter acknowledging receipt of the adopted TIP will be sent to the LPA.
6. PDB will review the adopted TIP for consistency with the draft STIP. Each modal division will provide written comments on the TIP to the PDB Regional Manager within two weeks of the TIP being submitted by the MPO. Inconsistencies will provide the impetus for modifying the draft STIP prior to the Board of Transportation’s approval, amendment of the adopted TIP by the MPO, or further negotiations between NCDOT and the MPO.
7. In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, PDB will transmit the locally approved TIPs, with conformity determinations, to the FHWA after they have been checked for consistency with the draft STIP.
8. After the Board of Transportation has approved the STIP, PDB will prepare the Secretary’s letter to the MPOs approving the TIPs and will send it to the LPA.
9. In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, PDB will notify FHWA of the Secretary’s approval of the TIPs.
10. In air quality attainment areas, PDB will transmit the locally approved TIPs to the FHWA after they have been approved by the Secretary of Transportation

B. Amendments to MPO TIPs

1. PDB will use the *STIP Amendment and Modification Guidelines* to determine whether a STIP change is an amendment or an administrative modification.
2. For highway/bridge/safety amendments originating from NCDOT, PDB will coordinate with the Division Engineer, who will be responsible for discussing the amendment with the MPO and receiving their input using the *STIP Amendment Form* prior to it being placed on Item N (handout). The LPA will review the amendments and notify the PDB Regional Manager and the Division Engineer no later than one week prior to the BOT meeting (that it will appear on Item N handout) of any issues that would prevent the MPO from moving forward with the public participation process and MPO approval. Once presented to the BOT on Item N (handout), the PDB Regional Manager will transmit (via email) the Item N (handout) to the

⁶ <https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/planning/Planning%20Document%20Library/STIP%20Amendment%20and%20Modification%20Guidelines.pdf>

LPA not later than 25 days prior to them being approved by NCDOT and they will be uploaded to the STIP Revisions webpage.

3. PDB will prepare and submit amendments of the STIP to the North Carolina Board of Transportation for adoption as needed.
4. PDB will verify that the amendment has been approved by the MPO, undergone public review as per the MPOs public participation process and that fiscal constraint requirements have been met prior to submitting to FHWA for approval.

III. Public Transportation Division

A. New MPO TIPs

1. The Public Transportation Division will provide the transit material to the PDB Regional Manager for inclusion in the draft STIP and TIP.
2. The appropriate PTD Transportation Consultant will monitor and facilitate the development and adoption of the TIP by the TCC and the TAC.
3. If necessary, a representative from PTD will attend the *MPO Review Session with NCDOT*. It is essential for the appropriate persons to attend this meeting so that they will be able to discuss any inconsistencies in the draft STIP and TIP. (note: nonexempt transit projects impact the transportation conformity process)
4. The Transportation Consultant will review the copy of the adopted TIP and will provide written comments to the PDB Regional Manager within two weeks of the MPO's transmittal of the adopted TIP.
5. The Transportation Consultant will coordinate any necessary changes to the transit portion of the submitted TIP with the LPA and the PDB Regional Manager.

B. Amendments to MPO TIPs

1. The public transportation element of the STIP will be amended periodically to incorporate local project amendments, new grant requests, and commitment of discretionary funds.
2. The appropriate Regional Mobility Director will prepare solicitations of proposed amendments and will transmit the amendment (via email) to the LPA. Proposed amendments should be transmitted (via email) to the appropriate Regional Mobility Director when available, not just when solicited by the Public Transportation Division.
3. The appropriate Regional Mobility Director will prepare the STIP amendments and provide written notification to the LPA no later than four weeks prior to them being adopted so as to ensure that the TIP is amended, to be consistent with the STIP.

4. The appropriate Regional Mobility Director will monitor and facilitate the development and adoption of the proposed transit amendments by the TCC and the TAC.
5. The appropriate Regional Mobility Director will alert the appropriate NCDOT personnel of any significant problems arising during the transit amendment process. Typically, the appropriate personnel would include the Director of the Public Transportation Division and the PDB Regional Manager.
6. The appropriate Regional Mobility Director will receive a copy of the TAC Chair's letter of transmittal of the amendment resolution and a copy of the amendment resolution. The appropriate Regional Mobility Director will prepare the letter of approval of the transit amendments.
7. PTD will prepare transit amendments for the STIP, and provide amendments to the Program Development Branch for submission to the North Carolina Board of Transportation. The appropriate Regional Mobility Director will prepare the letter of transmittal of the approved transit amendments to the Federal Transit Administration.

IV. Bicycle and Pedestrian Division

A. New MPO TIPs

1. The Bicycle & Pedestrian Division will provide the bicycle/pedestrian material to the Program Development Branch for inclusion in the draft STIP and TIP.
2. The Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Program Manager will serve as a liaison to the Lead Planning Agencies.
3. If necessary, a representative from the Bicycle & Pedestrian Division will attend the *MPO Review Session with NCDOT*. It is essential for the appropriate person to attend this meeting so that they will be able to discuss any inconsistencies in the draft STIP and TIP.
4. The Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Program Manager will review the bicycle/pedestrian portion of the adopted TIP. The Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Program Manager will provide written comments to the Program Development Branch within two weeks of the TIP being submitted.
5. The Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Program Manager will coordinate any necessary changes to the bicycle/pedestrian portion of the submitted TIP with the LPA and the Program Development Branch.

B. Amendments to the MPO TIPs

1. Changes to bicycle/pedestrian projects will be coordinated through the Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Program Manager and will be combined with highway/bridge/safety TIP amendments.

V. Transportation Planning Branch

A. New MPO TIPs

1. The TPB Urban Area Coordinator will obtain the TIP for their respective MPO from the PDB Regional Manager.
2. In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, it must be demonstrated that the draft TIP is a subset of the conforming MTP. The Urban Area Coordinator will participate in the required Transportation Conformity Determination process according to provisions laid out in FHWA's *Transportation Conformity Process Standard Operating Procedure*.
3. The Urban Area Coordinator will monitor and facilitate the development and adoption of the draft TIP by the TCC and the TAC. The Urban Area Coordinator will advise the TCC and the TAC of NCDOT's position on pertinent issues involving the TIP and vote accordingly during TCC meetings.
4. The Urban Area Coordinator will alert the appropriate NCDOT personnel of any significant problems arising during the TIP development and adoption process. Typically, the appropriate personnel would include the TPB Manager, the TPB Unit Head, and the PDB Regional Manager.
5. If necessary, a representative from TPB will attend the *MPO Review Session with NCDOT*. The TPB Air Quality Coordinator should be present for non-attainment/maintenance areas to provide guidance to NCDOT decision-makers on the potential impacts to the conformity determination.

B. Amendments to the MPO TIPs

1. For amendments originating from the MPO, the Urban Area Coordinator will receive notification (via email) from the LPA of the proposed amendments.
2. For highway/bridge/safety amendments originating from the NCDOT, the Urban Area Coordinator will receive notification from respective PDB Regional Manager (via email).
3. In air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas, the Urban Area Coordinator will participate in the required Transportation Conformity Determination process for the amendment according to provisions laid out in the FHWA's *Transportation Conformity Process Standard Operating Procedure*. The Urban Area Coordinator will monitor and facilitate the development and adoption of the proposed highway/bridge/safety amendments by the TCC and the TAC. The Urban Area Coordinator will advise the TCC and the TAC of NCDOT's position on pertinent issues involving the amendments and vote accordingly during TCC meetings.
4. The Urban Area Coordinator will alert the appropriate NCDOT personnel of any significant problems arising during the highway/bridge/safety amendment process. Typically, the appropriate personnel would include the TPB Manager, the TPB Unit Head and the PDB Regional Manager.

VI. Federal Highway Administration

A. New MPO TIPs

1. The appropriate FHWA staff members will monitor and facilitate the development and adoption of the TIP by the TCC and the TAC as needed.
2. The FHWA Division Administrator will receive the PDB Manager's letter of transmittal of the locally approved TIPs and conformity determinations. The TIPs will have been checked for consistency with the draft STIP, but **WILL NOT YET BE APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION. (non-attainment or maintenance areas only)**
3. The appropriate FHWA staff members will forward the TIP and conformity analysis to the Environmental Protection Agency and North Carolina Division of Air Quality for review and comment. **(non-attainment or maintenance areas only)**
4. The FHWA Division Administrator will receive the PDB Manager's letter of transmittal of the approved TIPs, for attainment areas, and a letter indicating that the non-attainment or maintenance TIPs have been approved by the Secretary.
5. The appropriate FHWA staff members will transmit a document indicating FHWA/FTA approval of the STIP and conformity determinations for non-attainment or maintenance areas to the PDB Manager.

B. Amendments to MPO TIPs

1. The MPO will provide verification of approval, appropriate public review, fiscal constraint, and transportation conformity requirements to FHWA.
2. FHWA staff will review proposed amendments and will approve when requirements are met.
3. The MPO will provide administrative modifications to FHWA for information purposes but FHWA not approve.

Appendix A - NCDOT Contacts

North Carolina Department of Transportation

1501 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1501
1-877-DOT-4YOU

Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

1552 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1552
919-707-2600
bikeped_transportation@ncdot.gov

Program Development Branch

919-707-4610

Public Transportation Division

1550 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1550
919-707-4685

Rail Division

1553 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1553
919-707-4700

Transportation Planning Branch

1554 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1554
919-707-0900

Appendix B – Acronyms and Definitions

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration – NC Division

LPA - Lead Planning Agency, MPO

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

MTP – MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (formerly known as LRTP)

MTP Horizon Year – Interim years in MTP, required for AQ Conformity.

NCDOT – North Carolina Department of Transportation

PPP – MPOs adopted Public Participation Plan

PDB – NCDOT Program Development Branch, Responsible for developing STIP

PDB Regional Manager – The Program Development Branch is divided into three regions. Each region has a manager that is responsible for coordinating with the MPOs, RPOs and Divisions.

PTD – NCDOT Public Transportation Division

STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program

TAC – MPOs Transportation Advisory Committee

TCC – MPOs Technical Coordinating Committee

TIP – MPOs Transportation Improvement Program

TPB - Transportation Planning Branch